

Eastern Illinois University The Keep

Faculty Research & Creative Activity

Family and Consumer Sciences

January 2007

Review: Water with Lemon

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Recommended Citation

Petruszak, Jessica; Hacker, Mary Jane; Gulley, Brie; and Burns, Melanie, "Review: Water with Lemon" (2007). *Faculty Research & Creative Activity*. 19.
http://thekeep.eiu.edu/fcs_fac/19

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Water with Lemon. Foco Z and Moss S, 2006. ZHI Publishing, 7134 Donegal Drive, Onsted, MI 49265, paperback, 242pp, \$16.95, ISBN 0-890926-10-8.

Water with Lemon is a health novel that focuses on 8 central steps on the path to a healthy lifestyle. The characters of Water with Lemon give readers motivation and direction towards common sense healthful lifestyle changes through the implementation of a few powerful habits.

Water with Lemon takes readers into the life of Karen, an overweight mother with a troubled marriage, and Fowler and Janice, her supportive, encouraging neighbors. Fowler and Janice enter Karen's life when it seems at its worst; her marriage is crumbling, and after attempting diet after diet, she is still overweight. As Karen gets to know Fowler and Janice she realizes that they too have had struggles. Fowler once battled with excess weight, and Janice still fights with a debilitating disease leaving her wheelchair bound. They comfort and console Karen, but most importantly they let her in on a big secret. Throughout the book Fowler and his

daughter Janice teach Karen about “The Power of One Good Habit,” as well as the 8 essential habits that will set her on the path to health and even weight loss.

Periodically, the plot tends to overemphasize the message of “The Power of One Good Habit.” “The Power of One Good Habit” is the central theme of the novel, and it asserts that through the altering of just one habit, significant and life-shifting positive changes on the way to good health will emerge. While the discussion of “The Power of One Good Habit” begins early in the book, the description of the habits does not occur until about halfway through the book.

The underlying premise of the novel is not to prescribe or assert strict diet habits, but rather to suggest simple lifestyle changes with examples included to assist the reader. The 8 habits for overall health described in the book were conceived by a dietitian and a health novelist experienced in weight loss. They include: limiting bad fats, eating breakfast, taming your sweet tooth, controlling the number of processed foods eaten (within reason), resisting the desire to eat when you are no longer hungry, increasing consumption of fruits and vegetables, eating food items that don’t fit into the habits (to give yourself flex room), and, of course, drinking more water (with added lemon for flavor). There are no science-based references used in this book, which makes sense because of the intended audience. Some of the habits are based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, whereas others are based on the authors’ knowledge of healthful food habits. Readers should be aware that this is not the average how-to diet book, but rather a novel with characters which the reader grows to emulate. Those recommending the book to others should also be aware of the negative views of the authors toward genetically modified food.

In a time when most of America is struggling with weight, *Water with Lemon* breaks onto the scene through the muddled mess of fad diets and nutrition misinformation. The novel format makes the messages more identifiable with today’s lay audience and provides reliable information that nutrition professionals can appreciate. The text is easy to comprehend and could be read by clientele with limited literacy skills or nutrition knowledge. Although the plain conversation and tone can, at times, seem scripted or unrealistic, it provides a refreshing alternative for the reader.

This book could be used in a small group to motivate readers to make lifestyle changes. Perhaps members of a group that meets weekly could discuss whether they are reaching possible goals of emulating characters as they transition through the habits. Group members could discuss their struggles with each habit and motivate each other to keep trying. This book would also be useful for an individual client who is ready to make lifestyle changes. The client could be motivated through the companionship of the characters and encouraged to continue the journey of changes.

The overall message of “The Power of One Good Habit” is useful and is rooted in practicality. *Water with Lemon* portrays the difficulties involved in moving through the stages of change and overcoming the fear of diet failure. The 8 steps Fowler and

Janice teach Karen are moldable, shapeable habits that are designed to assist individuals. These are the habits that dietitians and nutrition professionals have exhaustively attempted to teach for decades. This new approach, using a story format for teaching credible nutrition information, shows great promise. The habits outlined in the book are highly adaptable to individuals and implemented slowly. Water with Lemon is not a book for the overweight population alone, but also for those needing to change their eating habits to increase overall health. Those who have struggled with weight may see this as a nonrestrictive, nondiet approach to health and as a simple way to change a few unhealthful habits into a few great ones.

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